



And Many Happy Returns! Taking Back Those Gifts

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MADISON – Holiday returns are almost as much a tradition as holiday giving, with 20 percent of Americans planning to return a gift this holiday season. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) reminds consumers to learn how refunds and returns work before you buy.

“Retailers set their own return and refund policies, and they can be complex,” said Sandy Chalmers, Administrator of the Division of Trade and Consumer Protection. “A different return policy may apply to each item you purchase.”

For instance, some retailers relax their return policy for the holidays by extending the usual cut-off date for returns. But different conditions may apply to sale, clearance or closeout items. A restocking fee may apply to returns of electronics items. Or a retailer’s online return policies may differ from in-store policies.

“When you’re in a store, ask specifically whether they offer cash back, in-store credit, or a credit card adjustment,” said Chalmers. “If the return and refund policies are not posted or printed on your receipt, ask a store employee to write the policy right on the receipt.”

When shopping online or over the phone, double check to see who pays for the return shipping, and get the return policy in writing. If you cannot find the return policy on a website, wait to purchase until you clarify the policy with a company representative.

DATCP offers the following tips to make your holiday returns and exchanges go more smoothly:

- Provide a gift receipt or sales slip when giving a gift. At the very least, leave the price tag on –cut off the price, and leave the rest of the information on the tag.
- Keep the item in its original packaging material and unopened if possible. If the item is in new condition, there is a better chance you won’t be charged a restocking or packing fee.
- Know the limited time frame for a return. Make your returns quickly.
- Understand the conditions when buying items on clearance or sale. Some stores may not accept returns on these items, making a good deal not so great.

To file a consumer complaint or for more information, visit datcp.wisconsin.gov, call toll-free 1-800-422-7128, or email datcp hotline@wisconsin.gov.

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